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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Association Miraisme International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human rights of children in armed conflict and sustainable development

"What we give to children, they will give to society"
(Menninger)

On 20 November 1989, the Convention on 'the Rights of the Child' was adopted in order to oblige all signatory states to establish a genuine framework for protection of children's rights. Specifically, Article 6.2 states that: "States shall ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of the child". More than two decades have passed since then and could we say now that countries have made every effort to ensure the survival and development of children? Could these children really grow in safe environments without experiencing fear for their life or their future?

If we analyse how the war in Syria has developed, a territory where death and destruction mark the lives of many people, and also locks the future of those who survive, especially children, the lack of protection of these children is complex. However, Syria is not only the territory where this lack of protection of children's lives takes place. Indeed, UNICEF highlights that: "every five minutes somewhere in the world, a child dies as a result of violence"[1]

Child trafficking also seriously violates the rights and dignity of children. In this sense, child labor continues to have repercussions today, employing about 250 million children[2], most enduring deplorable conditions far from any guarantee or insurance coverage. Not only that, but also prevents them from having an integral development, since many of them have no access to basic education or basic health care. The international sale of children also contributes to their being used to beg in the streets, getting forced marriages, work as domestic workers and having their organs trafficked.

Their recruitment by terrorist groups, paramilitary or guerrilla is also common, being described by the International Criminal Court as a war crime[3] whether his enlistment is forced or voluntary, as in the latter case, children resort to this as an exit door from poverty or to find a haven in the midst of war. In addition to suffer sexual abuse and serve in combat, often they are subject to beatings and assaults, and have even been used as 'children bomb'.

In Colombia, children who are recruited by groups outside the law, e.g. guerrilla, come mostly from poor families without access to basic rights, and have been surrounded by violence and insecurities, so they are enticed by promises of a better life by such groups. Many of them come from families that have links with armed groups or whose family environment is synonymous with physical and psychological treatment. They all have in common vulnerability, which is exploited by such groups outside the law and although they have joined voluntarily, they do not have the same freedom if they want to defect. Even when they do not join any armed band, their integrity remains at risk because other reasons linked to war including displacement, orphaning, crossfire, reprisals and kidnapping among others.

The lives of these children in the midst of armed conflict is subjected to degrading conditions that leave scarfs which are difficult to overcome. There are just a few who are lucky enough to get away from that scenario and live a normal

[1] UNICEF. Now you see it. Retrieved February 7, 2016 to: http://www.unicef.org.ec/ahoraqueloves/#

[2] HUMANIUM. *Child labor in the word*. Retrieved February 7, 2016 to: http://www.humanium.org/es/trabajo-infantil/

[3] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary -General for Children and Armed Conflict . Role of the International Criminal Court. Retrieved February 7, 2016 to: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/es/nuestro-trabajo/tribunales-internacionales/

life. Most of them, on the contrary, are marked with the traces of the war, being the psychologicals the most painful ones, which eventually might turn into aggressive, antisocial behavior and emotional disorders.

It should be noted, however, that during the peace negotiations that are taking place in Cuba in November 2015, the FARC agreed to end the recruitment of children under 18 as well as free children in their ranks under 15 and collaborate with their reintegration[4].

In addition to the armed conflict, lack of opportunities and the absence of a minimum quality of life make many children end up in poverty, crime, drug trafficking and prostitution. Thus, for instance, children gunmen claim that they are forced to kill for money because it is the only way they can support their families.

Protecting our children is not only a duty, but also a shared obligation by the governments and society. Guaranteeing a decent life, access to quality education, adequacy of resources and equal opportunities is essential to combat poverty and allow the construction of their future. To make this possible, it is necessary to take into account the best interests of children under the design of policies and strategies aimed to procure their wellbeing, accompanied by access to decent and stable work for their parents, which allows them meet the needs of your family and keeps them away from the risk of social exclusion.

Although children are characterized by their strength and resilience, it is essential to support them in all aspects, especially in the psychological, for their fully and effectively social reintegration, saving them from any markings or value judgment that can direct against and isolated from society. In addition, your personal and professional development, and overall the whole community must be founded on the principles of respect for human dignity, fundamental freedoms and human rights. Only with the commitment of the entire country and the international community at large, it is feasible to achieve this goal. If necessary, we must bring to memory every day that war, our children are the most innocent and yet are the ones who suffer most. In his short life cannot understand the why or wherefore of conflicts but were loading guns, bombs and guns. They dream of making friends and playing with them, but are forced to torture, murder and live bloodstained. Need to develop fully as individuals, but lack of opportunity and the necessary means. Crave love, but, instead, they are indifference.

Thus, we propose to analyse in depth those communities threatened by groups outside the law, drug trafficking, prostitution and high levels of violence in order to continuously monitor on knowledge, application and respect of human rights. Linked to this, the establishment of an education in values that inculcate the content and outreach of the Convention for children's rights, and at the same time, the importance of letting your superiors this situation. Such education should be both institutional and familiar.

Ensuring support to the injured, threatened and displaced population is vital to achieving its full reintegration, and for this it is necessary both governmental and social participation in the deployment of plans to combat poverty and improve the living conditions of these children through training on employability and entrepreneurship and creating jobs that provide economic stability. Similarly, it is necessary to support and strengthen organizations committed to developing equitable access to opportunities, creating spaces for dialogue, with the participation of the community, as to provide full access to justice, and the effective mechanisms of judicial and police protection, and on the usefulness of the strategies implemented for the rehabilitation and prevention of violence and social exclusion.

All the above should be accompanied by a national and / or internationally monitoring process on the progress and periodic accountability as a basis for the implementation of future programs.

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[4] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Colombia: UN Special Representative welcomes the commitment of the FARC-EP to stop child recruitment. Retrieved February 7, 2016 to: https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/es/compromiso-farc-detener-reclutamiento-ninos/